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09/005,006	01/09/1998	SHUICHI KANNO	ASA-695	1954

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EXAMINER

NGUYEN, NGOC YEN M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1754

DATE MAILED: 07/13/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/005,006

Applicant(s)

KANNO ET AL.

Examiner

Ngoc-Yen M. Nguyen

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on April 23 and 30, 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 40-51 and 75-86 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 75-78 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 40-51, 79-86 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

In this office action, the species of C-F as the compound in the gas stream and aluminum oxide-nickel oxide catalyst are being examined. These species were elected without traverse in Paper No. 6 (filed July 26, 1999). Since there is no clear request from Applicants to shift to other species when filing the request for continued prosecution application, only the originally elected species are treated on the merit in this office action.

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 40-51, 79-86 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

There is no sufficient support for the limitation of "a decomposition of *about 80% or greater*" as required in the instant claims 40, 48, 80 and 81, 82 or "at about 95% or greater" as required in the instant claim 83. Applicants have pointed out support for such support can be found in Figure 7. This claimed range of "about 80% or greater" or "at about 95% or greater" would include values such as 79% (i.e., *about 80%*) or 100% (i.e. greater than 80%), however, there is no support in Figure 7 for these values.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

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(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 40-43, 45-49, 51, 79-86 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Rossin et al (6,069,291), optionally in view of Okazake et al (5,151,263) and Imamura (5,649,985).

Rossin '291 discloses a process for the decomposition of perfluoroalkanes to HF and CO₂ (note claim 1). The process comprises contacting the perfluoroalkanes with aluminum oxide. The perfluoroalkane is contacted with aluminum oxide at a temperature ranging from about 400°C to about 1000°C, or preferably from about 550°C to 800°C (note column 2, lines 55-65). This range is well within the claimed range. The decomposition temperature of C₂F₆ is 750°C (note Example 1. This value is well within the claimed range.

Rossin '291 discloses that perfluoroalkanes are CF₄, C₂F₆, etc. (Note column 1, lines 25-28). Rossin '291 discloses, in Example XIX, a concentration of 5,000 ppm (= 0.5%) tetrafluoromethane (CF₄) in the gas to be treated. This value is well within the claimed range. For the other values of the claimed range, Rossin '291 does not disclose any limit for the concentration of the perfluoroalkanes in the gas to be treated. Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use the process of Rossin '291 to treat any exhaust gas, which contains perfluoroalkanes, especially when the gas was generated during electrolytic aluminum smelting, during tetrafluoroethylene manufacture, and during semiconductor manufacture (note column 3, lines 48-54).

The aluminum oxide is stabilized, for example, with an element selected from the group consisting of barium, calcium, nickel among others (note sentence bridging columns 2-3). The catalyst is formed by slurring pseudoboehmite aluminum oxide

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(which is encompassed by the claimed "boehmite") in an aqueous or non-aqueous liquid. Once mixed, one or more additional components may be added to the slurry. These additional components may be added as solid metal salts, such as nitrates, acetates, oxalates, chlorides, halides, etc., or may be added as small metal or metal oxide particles. Once mixed, the slurry may be aged, if desired, or used directly in the manufacture of beads, particles, spheres, etc., or used to coat an inert ceramic substrate, such as a monolith. Following manufacture or coating of the inert ceramic substrate, the resulting material must be calcined at a temperature between 350 and 900°C (note column 4, lines 36-55). The calcination would convert the additional components into oxide forms if they are not already were.

Rossin '291 further discloses that the process is also applicable to the injection of gaseous or liquid phase perfluoroalkanes into a gas stream, including an oxidizing agent, such as air for example, and water (which would become steam at reaction temperature) (note column 5, lines 28-37 and column 3, lines 8-11).

In Rossin '291, since Ni is specifically disclosed as one of the additional components that can be added to the aluminum oxide catalyst, thus, the disclosure of Rossin is considered as having "sufficient specificity" to include alumina-nickel oxide catalyst.

In any event, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to select any combination among the specifically disclosed compounds, i.e. nickel-aluminum oxide, Merck & Co. Inc. v. Biocraft Laboratory Inc. 10 USPQ 1846.

Rossin further discloses that if the concentration of hydrofluoric acid in the effluent stream is deemed unacceptable, conventional collection or abatement process, such as caustic scrubbing, may be employed to avoid venting acid gases directly into the atmosphere (note column 5, lines 44-48). The processes steps as required in the

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instant claims for removing HF from the exhaust gases are conventional and well known steps in the art.

For claim 79, Rossin discloses that perfluoroalkanes are released to the environment during certain industrial processes, such as during semiconductor manufacturing processes (note column 1, lines 21-30). Thus, It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to treat any perfluoroalkanes which were released from any semiconductor manufacturing process, including when such perfluoroalkanes were used as etchants or cleaners for semiconductor processes.

Optionally, Imamura '985 is applied to teach that HF is a water soluble component (note column 6, lines 48-49) and it can easily be removed by scrubbing with water (note claim 1).

Optionally, Okazaki '263 can also be applied to teach that acid compounds such as HCl, HF can be absorbed and neutralized by alkali (note column 4, lines 31-34).

Rossin discloses that the catalyst composition comprises aluminum oxide with the addition of between 0.01 and 50% of one or more elements selected from the group consisting of nickel among others (note paragraph bridging columns 3-4). The composition of the catalyst recited in Rossin '291 is stated in weight percent and were calculated based upon the elements described. When the metal component or components were added by wet impregnation techniques, the weight percent of the metal(s) within the impregnation solution and the amount of impregnation solution used to prepare the catalyst. When the metal component or components were added to the aluminum oxide precursor slurried in water, the weight percent of the metal component(s) were calculated from the amount of aluminum oxide precursor and the

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amount of metal(s) present within the slurry, the weight loss upon ignition of the aluminum oxide precursor (note column 6, lines 1-15). Rossin does not specifically disclose the atomic ratio.

However, from the weight percent, one skilled in the art can calculate to figure out the atomic ratio. In Example IV, using 60g/mole as the molecular weight for the pseudoboemite "AlO(OH)", and 148.3 g/mole for the magnesium nitrate, the atomic ratio of Al:Mg is calculated to be out 49:1. In Example XIII, using 159 g/mole for the zirconium hydroxide and the atomic ratio of Al:Zr is calculated out to be about 2.65:1. These values are within the claimed range. Even though, Rossin '291 does not use nickel as the metal component in any of the Examples, however, one skilled in the art would have reasonably expected that the mole ratio of Al to Ni and any Zn would also be within the claimed range. Moreover, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to optimize the atomic ratio of aluminum to nickel based on the disclosed range stated above to obtain a catalyst best suited for transforming perfluoroalkanes.

In Example XIX, the conversion % at 750°C was 97.5% (note column 13), thus, Rossin '291 fairly teaches that the catalyst used can promote the decomposition of the fluorine compound at a decomposition rate of 97.4%. This value is well within the claimed ranges. It should be noted that there is no minimum time requirement for "maintained". The decomposition rate as disclosed in Rossin '291 is considered as being "maintained" at least long enough to achieve such rate.

Claims 44, 50 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rossin '291 as applied to claims 40-43, 45-49, 51, 79-86 above, and further in view of Rosenbaum (5,460,792).

The difference not yet discussed is Rossin '792 does not disclose the addition of zinc oxide.

Rosenbaum '792 discloses a process for the destruction of hydrocarbon compounds, which uses a catalyst comprising a carbonaceous pyrolyzed resinous polymer. The catalyst is doped with a compound selected from the group consisting of metal oxides, metal oxyhalides or precursor metal salts wherein the metal of the metal oxides, metal oxyhalides and precursor metal salts is selected from the group consisting of Sc, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Co, Zn, Pd, Nb, Zr, Mo and mixtures thereof (note claim 1). Rosenbaum '792 further discloses that the process can be used for the destruction of organic compounds, which refer to either halogenated organic, or hydrocarbon compounds or mixture thereof (note column 4, lines 15-18). Exemplified compounds, which can be destroyed, are C_2Cl_4 , CCl_4 (note column 6, lines 6 and 9), Rosenbaum '792 teaches that the halide can be any halide, while chlorine and bromine are being preferred (note column 7, lines 28-26).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to further include zinc in the catalyst of Rossin '792 because Rosenbaum '792 suggests that zinc, just as nickel, would promote the destruction of the halogenated hydrocarbon.

Applicant's arguments filed April 23 and 30, 2004 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicants argue that no Example is given for a catalyst composition containing nickel oxide.

The disclosure of Rossin '291 should not be limited to just the examples. Rossin '291 clearly discloses that nickel is a suitable additional component for the alumina catalyst (note paragraph bridging columns 3-4).

Applicants argue that in Rossin '291, exposing a catalyst to a higher rate flow rate of fluorinated compound also reduces the conversion percentage.

Even though there is correlation seen between Examples XIV and XIX of Rossin '291 because they have different space velocity and decompose different perfluorocompound, however, even if the conversion percentage in Rossin '291 is reduced when exposing a catalyst to a higher rate flow rate of fluorinated compound as alleged by Applicants, the "reduced" rate of 97.4% as disclosed in Example XIX is still well within the claimed ranges.

Applicants argue that Rossin teaches that a stabilizer such as zirconium, which enhances the conversion percentage of fluorinated compounds when present at 3%, significantly lowers the conversion percentage when present in greater amount.

It should be noted that the amount of the additional component(s), such as Zr, Mg, Ni, etc., in Rossin '291 is disclosed to be 0.01 and 50% (note paragraph bridging column 3-4). It would have been obvious to one skill in the art to optimize the amount of the additional component used, depending on type of the perfluorocarbon to be decomposed, the flow rate, etc. to obtain high decomposition rate, note Example IV, the mole ratio of Al:Mg is 49:1 to obtain 99.5% conversion. Even if Applicants' argument is correct for Zr component, the effect of Zr on the catalyst should not be generalized to all other suitable component, as evidenced by Example IV, as discussed above.

Applicants argue that unlike the catalysts in Rossin, the addition of more than 5 wt% of nickel to the catalyst results in a substantial increase in the decomposition rate for a fluorinate compound.

Granted that Rossin '291 does not disclose an example using Ni as the additional component for the alumina catalyst, however, as disclosed in the Examples, when any additional component is used, the decomposition rate or conversion rate is all above 93.5%. This fairly suggests that the amount of the additional component, the temperature, the flow rate, as well as other process conditions can be easily optimized to achieve high decomposition rate. This suggestion is applicable when the additional component is Ni, and the high conversion as achieved by Applicants is not seen as an expected result.

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

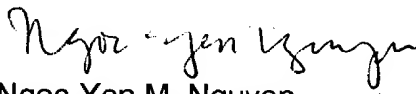
The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Ngoc-Yen M. Nguyen whose telephone number is (571) 272-1356. The examiner is currently on Part time schedule.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mr. Stan Silverman can be reached on (571) 272-1358. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 872-9306.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed (571) 272-1700.


Ngoc-Yen M. Nguyen
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1754

nmn
July 12, 2004